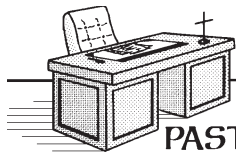


Trinity Tribune

Trinity Lutheran Church ✠ Paola, Kansas



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." (James 5:16)

About 30 years ago I began reciting this little prayer any time I would pass by a Mormon building, or see Mormon "missionaries":

"Lord, thwart and destroy that wicked and evil organization, and its wicked and evil leadership, and free from bondage all those who are held in its sway; in Jesus name, Amen."

This is called an "imprecatory" prayer, calling down God's judgment upon the enemies of Christ and His Church and the Christian Gospel. The model for such prayers is found in the prayer book of the Bible, the Psalms, about 10% of which feature imprecatory prayers (for example Psalms 5, 7, 10, 17, 35, 55, 58, 59, 69, 70, 79, 83, 109, 129, 137, 139, 140, 143).

The New Testament also includes a number of examples, showing that imprecatory prayers are proper for Christians (Acts 13:9-11, 1 Corinthians 16:22, Galatians 1:8-9, 2 Timothy 4:14, Revelation 6:9-10). And, in Matthew 23, Jesus Himself pronounced a series of imprecatory woes on those who rejected Him as the Messiah.

In the past 30 years I've probably recited that little prayer above well over a thousand times—quite a bit more lately, since several times each week I pass by a Mormon building a few blocks from the Lutheran High School in Kansas City. I also say this same prayer with regard to the buildings and "missionaries" of Jehovah's Witnesses.

I started praying this imprecatory prayer against the Mormons 30 years ago out of desperation. At the time, the Mormons were touted as supposedly the fastest-growing religion in the world. Some actually predicted that by the end of 21st century Mormonism would be the largest religion in the United States, more than all Christian denominations combined.

As a Pastor of struggling mission congregations, it was very discouraging to me that the Mormons should seemingly have such success—with all their weird, anti-Christian dogmas—as compared to our own Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and Christianity in general. It made me feel helpless; but one thing I *could* do was pray.

Instead of considering prayer a last resort, I should have looked upon prayer as a mighty weapon, and trusted the promises of Scripture about the mighty power of prayer.

Imagine my surprise last month when I listened online to an episode of the excellent LCMS radio program *Issues, Etc.* (www.issuesetc.org), and the guest mentioned in passing a catastrophic decline in Mormon membership—over the past 30 years! It turns out that all along their supposed phenomenal growth was a lie—a cleverly concocted and ingeniously implemented public relations myth.

Though they have tried to keep up the façade, decades of lies have caught up with them, and led to a growing discrepancy between the membership figures they report compared to those who actually claim Mormon adherence in surveys of the general population.

The magnitude of this deception is staggering. Though the Mormon organization reports some supposed 15 million members worldwide, experts put the real figure at less than 5 million. Such discrepancies recently forced the Mormon organization to make several embarrassing "adjustments" and "corrections" to their membership figures, and the truth has come out about an accelerating collapse in Mormon membership.

The Mormon official historian was recently asked if the Mormon leadership knows that members are "leaving in droves." "We are aware," he replied. "And I'm speaking of the . . . hierarchy . . . they really do know." He went on to attribute this decline to the open availability on the Internet of information about Mormonism to Mormon members. "Everything's out there for them to consume if they want to Google it," he said.

Christian evangelists who work to free Mormons from this cult, many of whom are former Mormons themselves, agree that the rise of the Internet 30 years ago was a key factor in undermining the Mormon religion, because it allows Mormon members to research and check out the questionable history and dogmas of Mormonism. Perhaps the most stunning example—the subject of the *Issues, Etc.* episode I listened to—is the official acknowledgment which finally came last month that Joseph Smith was a polygamist.

The Mormon organization had always staunchly denied to its members that Smith had more than one wife, denouncing such claims as a gross slur against the founder of Mormonism. But, last month they published an article officially admitting that he was indeed a polygamist—and worse. He had over 40 "wives"; many of them were already married, and stolen by Smith from their husbands; and he was a child molester,

consummating supposed “marriages” with several girls as young as 14. Official admission of such disturbing facts, previously long denied by the Mormon organization, is causing many Mormon members to realize that their whole religion is built on a foundation of lies.

I also think another factor truly is the prayers of Christians, including my little prayer above. Indeed, you are really praying the same thing every time you pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “Hallowed be Thy name” and “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” As Martin Luther explains in the *Small Catechism*:

“God’s name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity . . . But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God’s Word profanes the name of God among us. From this preserve us, heavenly Father! . . . God’s will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose . . . but strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith.”

I admit that I was very surprised to learn that the Lord is indeed thwarting and destroying the wicked and evil Mormon organization, and its wicked and evil leadership, and freeing from bondage so many who are held in its sway. But, I shouldn’t have been surprised. After all, isn’t that *exactly* what I’ve been praying for, thousands of times, over the past 30 years?

Trinity Tribune

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St. Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 10:4, *“The weapons we fight with are not merely human. On the contrary, they have divine power to destroy strongholds.”* Instead of considering prayer a last resort in the struggle against this cult, I should have looked upon prayer as a mighty weapon. That is why prayer is the culmination in St. Paul’s description of our Christian spiritual armor in Ephesians 6:10-18:

“Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying . . . ”

And, I should have trusted the promises of Scripture about the mighty power of prayer—my little prayer above, your own prayers in the Lord’s Prayer, and the similar prayers of countless other Christians:

“Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened unto you. For whoever asks, receives; whoever seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:7-8);

“I tell you the truth, My Father will give you whatever you ask in My name” (John 16:23);

“This is the confidence that we have in approaching God: if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14);

“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16).

Pastor Kevin Vogts



Poinsettia Donations

Donating poinsettias to beautify our Sanctuary is a great way to remember loved ones at Christmas! Sign up on the counter in the Church Office to order plants from Price Chopper at a cost of \$7 each. Place your payment in the offering marked “Poinsettias.” Deadline for ordering thru the Church Office is Sunday, December 21.

When signing up please indicate how many plants you wish to donate and for whom they are in memory or honor. You are also *welcome* to bring your own poinsettias, which you purchase elsewhere or receive as gifts. Just drop them by the Church sometime before Christmas Eve and leave them on the tables in the Overflow. Please still sign up on the sheet in the Church Office, indicating that you are providing your own plants, and for whom they are in memory or honor.

Our thanks to Paul Haley for constructing new displays for poinsettias and lilies, which we will be using for this first time this Christmas, and to Barb Dillenbeck for arranging the plants.



Christmas Eve CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Bring your family and holiday guests to celebrate our Savior's birth with our Christmas Eve Children's Program and Candlelight Service on Wednesday, December 24 at 7:00pm. The theme of this year's service is "Light a Candle" and includes favorite Christmas carols including "Silent Night" sung by candlelight. "O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!"



Christmas Eve Children's Program Practice

The theme for this year's Christmas Eve Children's Program on December 24 at 7:00pm is "Light a Candle." We are having only two practices, so please have your children here!

The first practice will be after worship on Sunday, December 21, with chicken noodle soup provided for lunch.

The second practice will be Monday evening, December 22 at 6:00pm, with dinner provided for all!

If you can't get your child here because of transportation issues, please let Michelle Haley know and we will be happy to help!



Come celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord on Thursday, December 25 at 10:00am. Our special order of service will feature your favorite carols as we gradually light the candles of the Advent Wreath to represent the different characters in the Christmas story, Mary, Joseph, Angels, Shepherds, and Wise Men.



Festival of Readings and Carols December 21

Our morning worship on Sunday, December 21 will be a Festival of Readings and Carols. This special order of service is an English custom, having

been conducted on Christmas Eve for nearly 100 years in the chapel of King's College, Cambridge, from where it is broadcast each year in the United States on Public Television, and in many other English churches.

The service includes a series of Scripture readings related to the Christmas story, each followed by a Christmas carol, choir anthem, or solo. Our service will also include Holy Communion.



Extra Communion Sundays

In response to requests from members, the Board of Elders and Church Council have decided to offer Holy Communion twice during the months of November thru February, due to the potential for severe weather during the winter months which may prevent some from attending on some Sundays. During those months we will have Holy Communion on both the 1st and 3rd Sundays.

2014 Advent Devotional Booklet

"Come, Lord Jesus" is a daily devotional booklet for Advent from Concordia Publishing House. Copies are available on the counter in the Church Office if you haven't received yours yet. In the midst of all the hustle and bustle use these brief devotions to help you focus on the real "reason for the season"!

NEW YEAR'S DAY WORSHIP



We will observe New Year's Day and the Circumcision of Our Lord on Thursday, January 1, 2015 at 10:00am. Pastor Vogts' message will be "The Twelve Blessings of Christmas: Gentleness and Self-Control" based on Matthew 1:18-25.



Christmas Communion

On Sunday, January 4 we will conclude the Advent-Christmas season with a "Christmas Carol Communion Service." For this special service favorite carols will be used in place of the various parts of the Liturgy. Pastor Vogts' message will be "The Twelve Blessings of Christmas: Peace" based on Isaiah 2:1-5.



We list birthdays and anniversaries in the newsletter each month and the bulletin each week. However, our



Advent-Christmas Sermon Series

November 30
1st Sunday in Advent
Patience

December 7
2nd Sunday in Advent
Faithfulness

December 14
3rd Sunday in Advent
Salvation

December 21
4th Sunday in Advent
Song: Festival of Readings and Carols

December 24
Christmas Eve
Goodwill

December 25
Christmas Day
Love and Joy

December 28
First Sunday after Christmas
Kindness and Goodness

January 1
New Year's Day
Gentleness and Self-Control

January 4
Second Sunday after Christmas
Peace

records may not complete. If your information is missing or inaccurate, please accept our apologies and notify the Church Office at 849-3344 or email Church Secretary Stacey Elkinton at blockt1c@midwest-connections.com.

December 1.....Kristie Gatlin
December 1.....Brianna Chapman
December 5.....Jennifer Haley
December 5.....Tyler Barnett
December 6.....Susan Henry
December 6.....Linda Oberheide
December 8.....Anita Koopman

December 8.....Hank Thoden
December 9.....Marsha Windish
December 10.....Betty Crome
December 10.....Don Prothe
December 11.....Pam Holtz
December 11.....Nancy Honn
December 13.....Justin Prothe
December 13.....Dillon Reyelts
December 15.....Chris Jones
December 15.....Linda Prothe
December 16.....Joyce Johns
December 16.....Jake Prothe
December 19.....Samantha Honn

December 20.....Ted Gerken
 December 21.....Carole Brandt
 December 21.....Nancy Green
 December 22.....Jack Smith
 December 25.....Shawn Brandt
 December 25.....April Bruce
 December 25.....Darleen Medlin
 December 25.....Harold Peckman
 December 26.....Brandon Prothe
 December 28.....Shemene Peckman
 December 28.....Royal Prothe
 December 29.....Dan Minden

Leland & Slina Prothe
 December 2 (59 years)

Henry & JoAnn Vaughn
 December 3 (26 years)

Darrell & Sandra Schultz
 December 6 (23 years)

Mike & Trish Armstrong
 December 16 (19 years)

Steve & Kristie McMullin
 December 17 (20 years)

Richard & Mary Ann Green
 December 28 (39 years)



Bring Your Family and Guests to Celebrate
 the Real "Reason for the Season"

Christmas Eve Service, Wednesday, December 24, 7:00pm

Featuring the 2014 Children's Christmas Program
 "Light a Candle" with Your Favorite Christmas Carols
 Including "Silent Night" by Candlelight

Christmas Day Service, Thursday, December 25, 10:00am

All Invited — Everyone Welcome!

Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful!



Adult Bible Study

We are continuing our study in Adult Bible Class on *The Week that Changed the World*. In this fascinating study we are exploring the events of Holy Week, which are so central to our faith, using a booklet that shows side-by-side the accounts of these events from the four Gospels.

You are invited to join in on Sundays at 9:00am in the Overflow to grow in your faith, and your understanding of the real significance of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection and *The Week That Changed the World*.



Thank you to all those providing snacks for Coffee Hour during December and throughout all of 2014! Later in this month we will put out a sign-up sheet for 2015.

December 7
 Garrison

December 14
 Sharon & Gladys Prothe

December 21
 Gerken

December 28
 Vogts



Sunday School Topics for December

December 7—As we observe this Second Sunday in Advent, Sunday School students study the story "An Angel Visits Mary." In the womb of Mary, Jesus, the Son of God, became a man so that we sinful people might become adopted children of God and share in the inheritance of heaven.

*How does God make us His children?
 What do we inherit as God's children?*

December 14—Today in Sunday School we study “An Angel Visits Joseph.” Just as the angel proclaimed to Joseph that Mary would bear an infant who is the Son of God, the Savior, so God proclaimed to us in His Word that this same Jesus is our Savior from sin and death.

What important message did the angel give Joseph? What important message do we hear in God's Word?

December 21—The birth of Jesus serves as the focus of the Sunday School lesson for today. The Son of God became what wearer, human, to make us what He is, a child of the heavenly Father.

Why is it important that Jesus became a human like you and I? Why is it important that Jesus was both God and man?

December 28—On this First Sunday after Christmas, the Sunday School lesson focuses on “The Presentation of Jesus.” In the Divine Service, we join with Simeon and Anna, the angels and archangels, and the great cloud of witnesses in heaven and on earth hailing Christ as the fulfiller of the Law.

Where do we sing our praises to God? How has Christ fulfilled the Law for us?



December Acolytes

December 7 Evan Kettler
 December 14 Luke Elkinton
 December 21 Olivia Mitchell
 December 25 Lance Elliott
 December 28 Karlie McMullin



New Year's Day WORSHIP SERVICE

Bring Your Family and Holiday Guests to Celebrate the New Year at Trinity, Thursday, January 1, 2015, 10:00am

All Invited — Everyone Welcome!

Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations!

(Psalm 90:1)



Our congregation helps support these missionaries sent out by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through our mission contributions. Each month we remember in prayer in our worship services—and you are encouraged to remember in your personal prayers—specific missionaries around the world who are supported in this way by our congregation.

December 7
Michael & Beth Ritzman
Papua New Guinea

December 14
Rev. Joshua & Amanda Gale
Peru

December 21
Philip Jaseph
Kenya

December 28
Rev. Chuck & Jean Hoffman
South Korea

JCPLayZone Web Site for Children

With all the bad things kids can encounter on the Internet, what a blessing Lutheran Hour Ministries has JCPlayZone—a great web site for your children! Check out the fun at www.jcplayzone.com, including games, Bible stories, music, coloring, cards, crafts, memory verses and more! For the Christmas season there's the games “Christmas Bounce” and “Snowball Warrior” and a video of the Christmas story.